



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH ACROSS THE NATION FOR THE HOLIDAYS

It's not spot news that seafoods now range across the nation's holiday feast-tables with equal prominence alongside other traditional entrees. Thanks to streamlined transportation and modern methods of refrigeration, that's old stuff.

News does lie, however, in the facts of a recent survey by Fred F. Johnson (Memorandum S-346), Assistant Chief, Division of Fishery Industries, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior. It indicates, among other things, those species of fresh and frozen fish and shellfish consumed month by month in greatest quantities in 60 big cities all over the country.

"For the pre-holiday religious fast days and those post-season 'tired-of-turkey' meals", says Johnson, "there is an abundance of species of fish and shellfish available in our markets from which the housewife may select to add variety and substantial food value to the family table."

In the Nation's Capital, croaker, or hardhead, the little speckled brown 1-1/2 pounder, ranks all other species during the Christmas season. Only a "hoot and a holler away", however, Baltimore seems to favor the

squeteague, a 3 to 5 pound fish, sometimes called the sea trout. Down Richmond, Virginia, way they also select the croaker, as well as the king mackerel; Norfolk, to be different, prefers flounders, and prepares them as "filet of sole". In and around Washington, by the way, they like croaker in what is locally called the Chesapeake Bay Stew. This calls for a medium-sized croaker (about 1-1/4 pounds), cleaned and gashed crosswise through to backbone; potatoes, sliced crosswise and rather thin; onion; salt and pepper to taste. Add only enough water to produce sufficient steam for cooking, which does not require much time.

Savannah puts whiting at the top of its December list and probably fries or sautees 'em. In Atlanta, as well as in Birmingham, Alabama, the croaker is again No. 1 fish. In Columbia, South Carolina, the hardhead and mullet tie for first place. In Tennessee, Memphis selects the buffalofish, with catfish and groupers the runners-up. Groupers, a prettily mottled fish, are a favorite in the South, excellent for baking whole, as steaks or as fillets.

Nashville favors oysters, and is likely to serve them grilled, in this manner: One pint of select oysters. Put a large piece of butter into a hot pan, and when it smokes drop in the oysters, a few at a time. Whey they are browned, remove to a hot dish and pour over them a sauce made of melted butter-thickened flour. Season with Worcestershire sauce, salt, and cayenne, and serve on toast. Garnish with parsley.

Mobile, Alabama, takes red snapper--a handsome fish with red scales known as the "quality" fish of the South. Most desired market sizes are 6 to 10 pounds. It is on the fishery for this species that Pensacola bases its title "The

Gloucester of the South". It is considered to be a "lucky" fish by Orientals. Japanese in Seattle, Washington, send all the way to Pensacola, Florida, for red snapper to serve as a "luck bringing" dish at their New Year feast. Excellence of red snapper as a baking fish is almost without parallel.

Two years ago, at the banquet given by the Fishery Advisory Committee in the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C., at which former Secretary of Commerce Daniel C. Roper presided, baked red snapper was served, prepared from the following recipe:

1 lb. cooked shrimp	1 boned red snapper
1 egg	1/2 tbsp. Anchovy paste
1 cup cream	Pepper, salt, paprika to
1 cup sherry	taste

Take a red snapper weighing about 5 lbs. Remove the head, scales and clean well and remove backbone. Wash, drain and rub with salt. Put shrimp through grinder. Beat egg and one half cream together. Mix shrimp and anchovy paste seasoning with pepper, salt and paprika, then stir into the beaten egg and cream, adding sherry and mixing to a smooth paste. Place stuffing inside fish and sew together with twine. Place in baking dish, pouring over it the remaining half cup of cream. Bake in a moderate oven until done (about 4 hours). Serve garnished with sliced cucumbers in French dressing.

In New Orleans it's shrimp--with squeteague the favorite fish. Shrimp support the most important fishery industry on the South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, and shrimp canning is the most important seafood canning industry of the South. French-fried shrimp require 1-1/2 lbs. green shrimp, 2 beaten eggs, juice of 2 lemons, salt and pepper, sifted cracker crumbs, and cooking oil or fat. Peel shrimp, wash, and remove sand vein. Place them in a bowl with lemon juice, salt and

pepper, and allow to stand for 15 minutes. Heat cooking oil to 380 to 400 degrees F. Dip shrimp into the beaten egg and then roll in crumbs. Place a single layer into a well oiled frying basket and cook for 3 minutes.

Portland, Maine, divides its favor for Christmas fish among cod, cusk, and haddock; while out in Portland, Oregon, two shellfish species--crabs and oysters--take first and third place, with steelhead trout snugly in between. The crab of the Pacific Coast, however, is a different species from the common or "Blue Crab" of the Atlantic Coast. It is known as the Dungeness crab and is found from Monterey, California, to Unalaska. This crab is much larger than Atlantic Coast varieties, measuring as much as 10 inches across the back shell. The meat of one of these crabs is usually sufficient for an ordinary individual, while two or three at the most will satisfy a person more than "fond" of crab meat.

The native oyster of the Pacific Coast--the Olympia oyster--contrariwise, is very much smaller in size than the Atlantic Coast oyster. Some food experts claim they have the finest flavor of any oyster in the United States. They are utilized to a large extent in cocktails and in stews. Pepper pan roast is made this way: 1 cup catsup; 1 inch slice butter off pound brick; mustard; 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce; salt and paprika. Heat all of above and thicken with 1 tsp. flour. Add 1 pint oysters. Put on back of stove to plump oysters. Serve on toast or crackers. Serves four people. Another favorite West Coast recipe for oysters is called the "Hangtown Fry": mix 2 plain scrambled eggs with one dozen small fried Olympia oysters.

During the holidays, Boston deserts the traditional cod for haddock; mackerel, flounders (the fish, if you will!) close behind. Cod is apparently prime favorite in neighboring Bridgeport, Conn. Mackerel's the fish for Fall River, Mass.

"Down Easters" are particularly fond of chowders, and Marjorie Mosser in her "Good Maine Food" (prefaced by Kenneth Roberts) gives this recipe: 1 cod, 1 haddock, 3 quarts of cold water, 1/4 pound salt pork, thinly sliced, 2 onions sliced thin, 6 potatoes cut thin, 6 common crackers, 1/2 cup butter, 2 tbsps. flour, 1 quart rich milk. Skin fish and remove bones. Boil heads and bones in water with a pinch of salt. Cut fish in pieces 4 inches square, wash, dry, and dredge with flour. Fry pork till brown; add onions and brown. Put pork in the bottom of a pot, add a layer of fried onion, fish, potatoes, salt and pepper and dredge in a little flour. Continue till all ingredients are used. Strain water in which heads and bones were boiling over the fish. If not enough water to cover, add hot water. Split common crackers and put them over the top. Boil 30 minutes. Rub flour and butter together, and add to fish. Add milk, boil up once and serve. Have on hand a reserve of common crackers moistened in hot milk, and serve a few with each helping of chowder.

Blue pike from lake Erie, which average about a pound, links Cincinnati and Buffalo as sister cities in their choice of fish favorites--despite the distance that separates them. Being a lean fish, blue pike should be pan fried to bring out its best flavor, for its flesh is firm, of good flavor, and not bony.

In Chicago, with taste more cosmopolitan, the competition is keen. Halibut, lake trout, pike, and whitefish all tie for top position as "most popular" December fishes; and lake herring and shrimp run close in second place. Halibut (which,

incidentally, is Lincoln, Nebraska's favorite, too), lake trout, and whitefish-- the latter two, fat fishes--should be broiled. Lake trout has merited very high favor as a food fish. Small sizes are generally boned, making an ideal broiling fish. Slices from large sizes are either pan fried or broiled while large pieces are excellent when baked. Fresh whitefish is renowned for the delicate flavor and quality of its flesh. Pike and lake herring are both lean, but it is best to broil pike and pan fry lake herring after dipping in batter. Lake herring is a member of the whitefish family, and they are sold in many places as "baby whites".

Out there, too, they like this recipe for planking the halibut: 2 lbs. fillets or steaks about 5/8 inch thick; 4 tbsps. melted butter containing 1/4 tsp. pepper, 1 tbsp. grated onion, cooking oil, salt. Put the cold plank into a cold oven and gradually preheat the oven and plank to 450 to 500 degrees F. Make a salt solution in the proportion of 2 tbsps. salt to 1 cup cold water. Soak fish in the salt solution for 3 minutes, drain, and thoroughly brush with the cooking oil. Remove plank from oven, oil it thoroughly and place fish on plank (skin side down), sprinkle with grated onion and return the plank to the top rack of the oven. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, basting once or twice with the butter-pepper dressing. About 5 minutes before fish is cooked, it may be surrounded with mashed potato and any desired cooked vegetables.

Detroit goes for lake trout; Cleveland, blue pike; Columbus, Ohio, lake herring; Indianapolis and Kansas City take oysters. They like 'em barbecued this way: 3 dozen large oysters in the shell, 1/2 lb. bacon sliced thin, bread crumbs, paprika. Wash oyster shells thoroughly. Open oysters, discarding the flatter shell. Separate oysters from the curved shell, but allow each to remain loosely in the shell. Cover oysters with bread crumbs and season with paprika, cover each oyster

with bacon, place oysters (in their shells) in one layer under a broiler flame until the bacon is cooked through. Serve oysters in the shells.

Milwaukee will have lake trout; Minneapolis, either lake herring or yellow pike (with whitefish and oysters second); Cedar Rapids and Davenport, in Iowa, select catfish as their all-year standby, with the Christmas month no exception. The flesh of catfish varies from almost pure white to deep red, and has a delicate flavor and fine texture. As one of the most preferred pan frying fishes, it is always in demand.

In New York City, flounders, haddock, and cod take December's first three positions. Also occupying the limelight at Fulton Fish Market is eel, brought in alive. This particular market absorbs around 300,000 pounds of eels every year, for the Italian-American trade. Many Long Island roadside stands now sell smoked eel. If you've always wanted to, but never have tried this delicacy, here's the way to prepare it, according to the Long Island Seafood Cook Book: 1 smoked eel, mustard sauce (No. 17), or as directed below. Skin the eel, wash and dry thoroughly. Cut into 2-inch pieces. Arrange pieces on a double broiler rack and broil over a charcoal or coal fire--or under an electric grid. Serve with a mustard sauce, made by blending a tablespoon of prepared mustard to a cup of drawn butter sauce.

In Philadelphia, the smelt leads the parade of Christmas favorites, with oysters next in line. Smelts are considered one of the most delicate of panned fishes, the flesh being lean and sweet with a particularly delicate flavor. Practically all are cooked by frying in deep fat after covering with a batter of cracker crumbs or corn meal. For today's gala Christmas, that old-time yuletide favorite--oyster cocktails--will introduce the meal, served with toasted soda crackers.

Out west, Butte, Montana, prefers halibut, not only in December but in all the other months as well. Refrigerating methods are responsible. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, frozen halibut is the Christmas favorite. In Tucson, Arizona, however, practically only a stone's throw away, it's sea bass. Salt Lake City prefers salmon where they bake it with a stuffing prepared as follows: 1 quart bread cubes, 3 tbsp. finely chopped onion, 2tsp. finely crushed sage leaves, 3/4 tsp. salt, 3/8 tsp. black pepper, 3/4 cup cooked celery, finely chopped, 4 tbsp. hot celery liquid, 6 tbsps. hot melted butter, mix the salt and pepper into the liquids and then stir in the celery. Pour this mixture slowly over the bread, with which the sage and onion has been mixed, without stirring, so as to moisten it thoroughly.

Spokane, Washington, chooses halibut and salmon, and prepares them any old way. Here's the favorite salmon recipe--"A la Newburg": 2 eggs boiled hard, chopped fine, 2 cups kippered salmon, 1 sweet bell pepper chopped. Make a cream sauce of 1 cup milk, small piece of butter, 1/4 tsp. salt. Put in double boiler, when scalding hot thicken with 2 tsps. flour mixed in a little cold milk. When cold add the above ingredients. Mix with a fork. Bake in buttered dish 1/2 hour. Serve with lemon.

San Francisco seems to prefer flounders around Christmas time. The one variety of flounder used commonly on the Pacific coast is known as the great, or starry flounder. It is an excellent food fish and is found from Monterey to Alaska. For baking, clean, wipe fish dry, add salt and pepper and lay in a pan; put flakes of butter on top, an onion cut up, some minced celery and a few bread crumbs. A cupful of hot water put into the pan will prevent burning. Baste often; bake until brown.

Seattle, understandably, chooses halibut, while Los Angeles selects the exotic totuava, with halibut for second choice. Totuava is a weakfish--Mexican sea bass--ranging in size from 50 to 225 pounds, and is an excellent food fish. For a delectable recipe, lay a fillet of this bass in a pan, season with salt and pepper, a few diced mushrooms and diced green peppers, cover with fish stock and white wine. When done, remove fish, mushrooms and green peppers, reduce broth to one-third, add some sweet butter and pour over fish.

So go fish across the nation for Christmas!

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